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ABSTRACT

This report discusses the outcomes of a practicum designed to address the lack of parent participation in American Sign Language (ASL) training by parents of children with hearing impairments. Using a pretest-posttest design, 46 parents of children who are deaf and receive services from a school for the deaf were surveyed. Based on the needs assessed in the pre-implementation survey, an implementation plan was developed using the resources of the school, parents, and community. Concerns of the parents were identified and four outcomes were specified and achieved. The program aimed at increasing awareness, attendance, use, and active involvement of parents in deciding the kind of sign-language instruction they want for themselves. The post-implementation survey data gave evidence of a 10 percent increase in all four targeted areas. As a result of the program there was an increase from 21 to 39 parents of the 184 eligible parents using the sign-language instruction programs that were offered. Appendices include the Sign-Language Instruction Program Survey for Parents, letters to parents, a synthesis of data compiled from the pre- and post-implementation surveys, and the summary report to parents on practicum completion. (Contains 32 references.) (CR)

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ED 437 755

Improving the Delivery of the Sign-Language Instruction Program for Parents of Children Who Are Deaf and Receiving Services From a School for the Deaf

by
Anne E. Toth
Cluster 85

A Practicum I Report Presented to
the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Approval Page

This practicum took place as described.

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January 17, 1999
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This practicum report was submitted by Anne E. Toth under the direction of the adviser listed below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

April 9, 1999
Date of Final Approval of Report

Joan M. Mignerey
Dr. Joan Mignerey, Ph.D., Adviser

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To the parents of children who are Deaf, I owe a special word of gratitude. Without your honest commentary and sincere dedication to the children with whom you wish to communicate, none of this work would have been accomplished. Your willingness to participate in this research, to find a way to communicate with your children, is a credit that is reflected in the efforts you have made to participate in and direct the sign-language instruction program at this school for the Deaf. For the children who are our greatest gift, this work has been well worth the endeavor.

A final acknowledgment goes to my family and friends. Far beyond the professional support I have received to address and solve problems, your belief in me has been the emotional support that has made this work possible. I share with you the success of this practicum.

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Abstract

Improving the Delivery of the Sign-Language Instruction Program for Parents of Children Who Are Deaf and Receiving Services From a School for the Deaf. Toth, Anne E., 1999: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Special Education/Exceptional Children/Communication Barriers/Language Disabilities/Deafness Issues/Bilingual/Bicultural Education/Adult Education/Social Work.

This practicum was designed to address the problem that programs that teach American Sign Language (ASL), in the home, school or community, have been provided through a school for the deaf but are being used by less than half of the eligible parents. Using a pretest-posttest design, parents of children who are deaf and receive services from a school for the deaf were surveyed. Based on the needs assessed in the preimplementation survey, an implementation plan was developed using the resources of the school, parents, and community.

Having identified concerns, four outcomes were specified and achieved. Aimed at increasing awareness, attendance, use, and active involvement of parents as to the kind of sign-language instruction they want for themselves, the postimplementation survey data gave evidence of a 10% increase in all four areas.

The practicum concluded affirming that programs that teach ASL, in the home, school, or community are being used by parents whose children are deaf and receiving services through the school for the deaf. Given the support received to overcome obstacles in this practicum, there is every reason to believe that the way in which problems have been solved will augur well for the continued growth and success of the programs offered.

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January 17, 1999 (date)

Anne Toth (signature)

Chapter I: Introduction

Description of the Community

The community, which is home to a residential school for the deaf and the setting of this practicum, is an urban center of more than 331,000 people that shares an economic base with industry, business, and a prominent university. Drawing from a geographical area which stretches northward from the Canada-U.S. border to its neighboring province to the west, students are presently flown, bussed, and driven so that they may attend this facility.

Children who are accepted into the school are considered "deaf" due to an audiological deficit (Robarts, 1997). The school is, however, aware that the use of American Sign Language (ASL) and involvement in the larger community of Deaf people represents an important differentiation between those who are audiologically "deaf" and disabled and those who consider themselves not disabled but "Deaf" and members of a linguistic and cultural minority (Padden & Humphries, 1988). As a result, though admission criteria outlines an audiological deficit, consideration has also been given to the child in the context of his family and his personal perception of his identity as a Deaf person.

Writer's Work Setting

Offering education to children and support to parents since opening its doors in 1973, the school has served its catchment community by operating an educational and residential program for children who are deaf (Robarts, 1997). In the context of these programs, sign-language services have a history of provision across the community

served by this provincial school. Seeking to facilitate the acquisition of a language that would be accessible to both parent and child, efforts have been made to provide instruction through various modalities and technologies. Courses have been set up in homes of parents, in the school itself, and in partnership with community colleges and centers at minimum or no charge.

The mission statement of the school makes a commitment to providing educational training and support services to children who are deaf, up to 19 years of age, and their families using a bilingual/bicultural approach (Robarts, 1997). Looking at the numbers specifically, this means that 96 students between the ages of 4 and 19 attend the regular school program and 88 preschool children up to the age of 4 years, receive services in their homes through such programs offered as home-visiting teachers, social-work, and a preschool Deaf mentor program.

What makes this work setting unique is the fact that services are provided using the medium of ASL. The school offers students an educational and social environment in which students and their families can be exposed to Deaf culture and sign-language. Like the population its serves, the school is staffed by teachers, residence counselors, and support staff–some of whom are hearing and others who are themselves Deaf.

Writer's Role

In relation to this practicum, the writer works at the school in the capacity of social-worker and as such is responsible for providing assessment, treatment, and related support services. Working in this capacity for almost 4 years, the writer has become aware of the problem from a variety of perspectives.

In the course of providing counseling to the children who attend this school and their parents, the complaint of not being able to communicate with each other has been made repeatedly. Citing difficulty in being able to voice adequately to their parents, parents have expressed a similar concern that their skills in sign-language use are lacking. Despite the expressed need to communicate using sign-language and the actual provision of sign-language courses, concern has been raised by the school that sign-language instruction programs are not being utilized to the degree that they can be continued.

Chapter II: Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

Programs that teach ASL, in the home, school, or community have been provided through a school for the deaf but are being used by less than half of the eligible parents.

Problem Description

The sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator has noted that parents have asked for assistance in learning sign-language in order that they might better communicate with their children. Programs have been established to meet that request but have not been fully subscribed and less than half of the parents who are eligible to use the sign-language instruction services available through their child's school for the deaf, attend this training (D. Friesen, personal communication, December 1, 1997). Given the financial constraints placed on the school budget, the minimum number of parents (extended family or other care providers having contact with the deaf child may also be included) required to hold a class is 6 to a maximum number of 15 (D. Friesen, personal communication, April 16, 1998).

Problem Documentation

Records kept by the sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator have been reviewed. Of a possible 96 families whose children attend the regular school program and 88 families whose children receive preschool services, less than half of the parents in either group attend sign-language instruction programs (J. Barry and D. Friesen, personal communication, December 1, 1997). While eligibility for parents is based on an audiological determination of hearing loss or, as noted above, a cultural/linguistic

identification of their child, the programs have no other restrictions and can be accessed for the asking. Despite this criterion, enrollment has not been meeting the six people per class minimum. Without sufficient enrollment, classes have been canceled and the program has been at risk of being severely reduced, if not discontinued (J. Barry, personal communication, December 15, 1997).

Causative Analysis

The cause for this problem has been difficult to pinpoint but may be approached by taking the perspective of the parents across a continuum of awareness of programming and skill in the use of sign-language. Communication strategies between parents and their children who are deaf may or may not have included the use of sign-language because the parents are themselves Deaf and/or have a level of ability in the knowledge and use of sign-language that is beyond the level of training presently being offered.

In discussion with the sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator (D. Friesen, personal communication, September 6, 1997) and a parent who is Deaf (S. Crockford, personal communication, September 20, 1998), the writer was reminded that some children have been born to one or two parents who are also Deaf and who use sign-language as their first language in the home. Further exploration of the matter through a review of the school roster revealed that, of the 184 students presently receiving services (96 enrolled; 88 preschool), only 4 of these children had 2 Deaf parents who used sign-language. Six other children were being raised by one parent who was Deaf and who used sign-language (Robarts, 1998). Unless the courses offered were of a sufficiently advanced level, it would, therefore, be unlikely that those parents would be interested in

taking sign-language courses.

At a school workshop with Deaf adults who had experience in working as Deaf mentors to families of children who are deaf, another explanation for not taking sign-language courses was given. It was shared that, even in families where only one parent was Deaf, the fact that at least one parent had facility with sign-language made possible communication with their child and that parent was likely to be seen as the main channel of information and instruction for the family (D. Friesen, personal communication, November 4, 1997).

Though parental deafness and present use of sign-language was considered to account for some parents not using sign-language programs provided by the school, other barriers were found to exist at the personal, family, and work level. Discussion with the sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator and the vice-principal of the external resource services program responsible for the program disclosed that courses have been offered on evenings during the week at minimal to no charge in the school, parental home, and community facility yet, even with those accommodations, the programs have not been adequately subscribed (D. Friesen, J. Barry, personal communication, September 8, 1997). Further discussion with a member of the school's parent association who had taken advantage of sign-language training (G. Allen, personal communication, December 17, 1997) and a parent who had never taken any sign-language instruction gave insight in terms of utilization motivators and barriers (E. Srouji, personal communication, December 9, 1997). Recognizing that only 10% of the population has been found to be congenitally deaf (Sacks, 1990) and that at least 90% of deaf children have hearing

parents (Carver, 1989), parents have admitted feeling isolated in terms of being able to relate to other parents in their community and uncomfortable in attending sign-language courses with strangers in another community.

Discussion with the executive director of an adult Deaf literacy program (C. Wilson-Lum, personal communication, February 27, 1997) as well as the vice-principal of the external resource services program, the sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator, and a home-visiting teacher (J. Barry, D. Friesen, and N. Geldart, personal communication, March 9, 1998), gave credence to the discrepancy felt by some parents between their desire to enter into a educational training program and their confidence in being able to successfully communicate through sign-language with their deaf child. In order to further investigate the relevance of the suggested causes, a preimplementation needs-assessment survey for parents was developed and administered to all parents of children who were deaf and presently being served by the school.

Data collected from the survey gave a greater understanding of how parents appreciated supports, as well as perceived barriers, to taking sign-language courses offered through the school. From this investigation it was discovered that the efforts to support parents, through reduced cost of courses and offering courses both in and outside of the home were valued. For those parents in the preschool program, an additional support of an adult Deaf person who worked as a mentor on a weekly basis with the parents in the family was seen as an effective way of developing a facility with the use of sign-language and appreciation of Deaf culture. Issues that were perceived by the respondents to need further consideration included such barriers as (1) awareness of

classes offered, (2) selection and comprehensiveness of courses, (3) choice of time of day, evening, or weekend classes, and (4) availability of childcare.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

A number of topic areas were researched in the course of the literature review. In an attempt to be systematic and thorough, the review of literature was broadened to include adult education, provision and utilization of sign-language programming, communication needs of children who are deaf, the barriers and communication strategies which exist between parents and children who are deaf, and the psychological impact on parents who are faced with the diagnosis that their child is disabled and/or deaf.

The literature gave evidence that the need to upgrade is influenced at both a personal and occupational level. It has been found that, throughout their lives, people must upgrade their skills (Mueller, 1997), yet it has been estimated that only 10% of the population returns to formal education for that purpose (J. Doull, April 13, 1998, personal communication; Organization for Literacy in Lambton, 1996). Though no one cause has been held solely responsible for the low rate of return to school by adults, studies have suggested that factors such as self-determination, family responsibilities, cost, and convenience of location and time have contributed to the problem (Mueller, 1997; Organization for Literacy in Lambton, 1997).

The availability of qualified, Deaf, adult instructors to teach sign-language courses has also provided insight as to the reasons for the present problem. Though benchmark work done by Stokoe (1960) and later, Valli & Lucas (1992) has verified the legitimacy of ASL as a true language, Lane (1993) has informed that the instruction of ASL has been

largely taken over by those who are not Deaf with the result that few people who are Deaf have the necessary training to formally teach the language. While educational upgrading has been made available for the majority population who communicate through the use of verbal and written English, O'Malley & Chamot (1990) and Lane (1989) have brought attention to the fact that, as with other linguistic and cultural minorities, people who are Deaf can expect fewer qualified teachers or comprehensive and challenging courses in sign-language.

The communication needs of children who are deaf pose a specific challenge due to the fact that most children who are born deaf or become deaf, have hearing parents. While some children who are deaf are born to Deaf parents, statistics have shown that 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents (Carver, 1989). Although health care continues to improve in the areas of childhood disease prevention and treatment, and hearing loss caused by such diseases as German measles or meningitis has become less prevalent, congenital deafness has persisted to the level of .1 % of the population (Sacks, 1990).

A review of the literature and results collected from the preimplementation survey has also brought attention to the fact that communication strategies between parents and their children who are deaf may or may not include the use of sign-language. It is recognized that sign-language may not be the first language of either parent or child (Cerney, 1995) and will, therefore, have to be systematically and formally taught. Due to a number of factors, including mis-or late- diagnosis, the parents being hearing, the inaccessibility to training in sign-language, or the availability of an appropriate Deaf adult

role model, it has been found that alternative strategies to communicate with the child--such as the use of technical devices, verbal and written English, lipreading, and interpretation--supplant the use of sign-language as the primary mode of communication between parent and child (Calderon & Greenberg, 1993; Meadow et al.1997).

The work of Manfredi (1993) relative to parental acceptance of hearing loss as a personal and social condition and that of Lederberg (1993) whose work underlines the reality that the primary effects of hearing loss will have a secondary effect as it impacts on the ability of the child, parent, and others in the social environment to communicate, has underlined the need for educational supports to parent of children who are deaf. While it has been identified that communication is an essential ingredient for maintaining the mental health of the child (Grimes & Prickett, 1988), the psychological effect on parents who see their child as being different as a result of being disabled or unable to learn the language of communication used by their parents, cannot be ignored. Though sign-language instruction cannot be expected on its own to eliminate the impact on parents who are faced with the diagnosis that their child is disabled and/or deaf, the incentive to use educational supports may relate to what Bodner-Johnson (1991) and Desselle (1994) have stressed in terms of parents demonstrating sincerity in finding viable ways to communicate with their child.

Chapter III: Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The goal of this practicum has been that programs that teach American Sign Language, in the home, school or community, are being used by parents whose children are deaf and receiving services through the school. While the initial goal of this practicum was to effect a change such that at least half of the eligible parents would be attending the programs, this practicum has reflected the benefit of a preimplementation needs-assessment. Put in the perspective of a group of 184 parents who were eligible to receive sign-language instruction programs through this school and were surveyed for the preimplementation needs-assessment, "at least half of the parents" could mean a number of 92. Consistent with the findings of others that the response rate of surveys tends to be less than 100% (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996), only 28 parents (15%) responded to the preimplementation survey despite follow-up letters, phone calls, and offers for individual telephone, TTY, or home interviews. Expecting a response rate from the postimplementation survey in the order of 50% was, therefore, unrealistic. Closer examination of the data received, however, was more encouraging in that it showed, of the 28 parents who responded, 21 (11%) indicated their use of some form of sign-language instruction program offered by the school.

As the initial step to a strategic plan that evolved with each application and modification, the outcome standard of performance accepted as a demonstration of success in this practicum was that parents would be using the sign-language training provided such that an additional 10% (or 39 of 184) of the eligible parents would be

attending courses.

Expected Outcomes and their Measurement

In an effort to gain insight on the effect of the intervention introduced, a pretest-posttest survey design was implemented. Consistent with the preimplementation needs-assessment survey (see Appendix A), but with the addition of a cover letter and change in text tense, a postimplementation parent needs-assessment survey (see Appendix C) was administered to all parents. As was confirmed in the first survey, confidentiality was assured in the consent form that each participant was required to sign (see Appendix B). Outcomes of this practicum were determined and will be measured in the following ways.

Outcome 1. A 10% increase in the number of parents who are aware of programs that teach sign-language, from 28 to 46 of the 184 eligible parents, as measured by a survey of all parents will be realized.

Outcome 2. An increase in the number of eligible parents who are subscribing to programs that teach sign-language instruction will occur such that the minimum requirements of 6 to a maximum of 15 persons per class will be met, as measured by records kept by the sign-language instructors (T. Rotondi, personal communication, and D. Friesen, former Deaf culture coordinator, December 5, 1998).

Outcome 3. A 10% increase in the number of parents who are using the sign-language instruction offered, from 21 to 39 of the 184 eligible parents, will be experienced as measured by data collected in the preimplementation needs-assessment survey (see Appendix A) and compared with data from the postimplementation parent needs-assessment survey (see Appendix C) administered to all parents.

Outcome 4. Parents will be found to be actively involved in asking for, shaping, and contributing opinions as to the kind of sign-language instruction they want for themselves such that, when surveyed relative to their knowledge and ideas about how to improve present programs, there will be a 10% increase in responses between pre- and postsurveys from 28 to 46 of the 184 eligible parents.

Further recommendations as to how to improve the revised services will also be uncovered and will be examined for their consistency with the short- and long-term goals of providing appropriate and effective services to children who are deaf and to their parents. With the short-term goal of providing the services of sign-language instruction in the way agreed upon with parents and administrators of the program, a long-term goal--that the school implements an ongoing process of evaluation such that programs continue to be relevant and practical--will be affirmed.

Description of Plans for Analyzing Results

Following the collection of information from the review of the literature, the data from the needs-assessment, and the postimplementation surveys administered, an analysis will be conducted. Based on the experience of administering and retrieving data from the needs-assessment and aware of the similarities that existed between that survey and the postimplementation survey administered, narrative and numeric data and will be presented in a descriptive form, narratively and graphically (Popham, 1993). To this end, the respondents' opinions, commentaries, and suggestions, will be captured in narrative form while responses to multiple choice and scaled questions will be reported through the visual representations afforded graphically by figures.

Relationships between and among data collected outside of the actual outcome results will be considered. While the above outcomes have focused on improving the delivery of the sign-language instruction program for parents of children who are deaf, the self-rating of parent's ability to communicate with their child will also hold interest for its connection to a larger concern about communication between parents and children who are deaf. Noting that only 5 of the 28 people who responded to the preimplementation needs-assessment survey rated their ability to communicate with their child at the "no difficulty" level, responses in the postsurvey will be, therefore, of interest. The identification of additional community resources and supports outside of what the school provides will also command attention, especially in the current era of fiscal restraint. With the possibility of postimplementation work, the relationship between data collected, pre- and postimplementation, and the practical problems of awareness, availability of resources, and use of programs, will be found to contribute to the overall assessment of the effectiveness of the implementation undertaken and direct postimplementation planning.

Considering that the postimplementation survey not only looked at the use of sign-language but also at improving the delivery of sign-language instruction, comments from parents as to barriers to usage and their suggestions as to how to enhance instruction, will be seen as critical pieces of information for further programming. While narrative summarization and analysis of direct responses from the surveys will be used, a process of tallying, grouping, and prioritizing comments received from the parents will inform and direct future problem-solving.

Mechanism for Recording Unexpected Events

Established in the initial planning stages, commitments were obtained from the vice-principal of the external resource services program, the former sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator, and the parent association for on-going collaboration and consultation throughout the practicum process. While care was taken to consult with school officials and parents about the purpose and design of this practicum, a mechanism for recording unexpected events was also developed.

Instead of completing the surveys with pen or pencil, parents were allowed to request face-to-face meetings or telephone/TTY interviews in English or American Sign Language. Changes in staffing or difficulty in hiring sign-language instructors because of the advent of other employment opportunities for staff were also considered and a plan was put into place that allowed for the reconstitution of the staff project group and the reorganization of class schedules when, in fact, coordination and instruction staff changes occurred.

In an age of governmental cuts to programs, the fiscal uncertainty of a budget for sign-language instruction programs was also faced squarely. Though this school may have been seen as an expert in the field of deafness, the consideration that teaching sign-language to parents (when it is a school for children), was also addressed. By working with senior management, such as the program director, and keeping that person informed of the response of the parents and their association's position, leverage was maintained in favor of the innovations proposed in this implementation plan. Given the limits expressed by parents as to their ability to financially cover the costs of instruction, as a

further back-up plan, consideration was given for collaboration with community schools and colleges in an effort to support sign-language programs.

Delays or reduction in service resulting from any of the above meant an adjustment in the form of advertising, programming, and evaluation of the implementation plan. With the goal of effecting a change such that a 10% increase in the number of eligible parents attending the sign-language instruction provided by the school be realized, this writer worked with the school staff to accommodate, as necessary, changes in the implementation plan.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

Topic areas researched within the literature review have included (a) adult education in relation to the provision and utilization of sign-language programming, (b) communication needs of children who are deaf, (c) the barriers and communication strategies which exist between parents and children who are deaf, and (d) the psychological impact on parents of children who are disabled and/or deaf.

As has been documented by other studies, the right to self-determination in all aspects of adult education is fundamental to the success of adult programming (TVOntario, 1989). Solutions to the problem have been found resident in consideration given to such factors as family responsibilities, cost, and accessibility (Mueller, 1997; Organization for Literacy in Lambton, 1997). With these considerations in mind and recognizing that the parents may self-select a particular sign-language course, factors such as the format and comprehensiveness of the course, day of the week, time of day, and childcare accommodation were vetted with the parents.

The provision and utilization of sign-language programming was shown to lie not only in an established curriculum but also, and importantly, in the availability and use of qualified Deaf teachers (Lane, 1993). Though philosophically the use of qualified Deaf teachers to teach sign-language has been supported, sensitivity to the fear some hearing parents have shared about being able to communicate with people who are Deaf, and education about second language acquisition, have been other important elements considered in sign-language education programming (Drasgow, 1998). As demonstrated

in other courses of instruction, models that have included Deaf adult teachers have been found to be good examples of how hearing and Deaf adults can communicate between two languages (SKI-HI Institute, 1996).

The communication needs of children who are deaf and who do not have Deaf parents were also addressed. Informed by the experience of parents who have participated in sign-language instruction programs offered by the school, it was discovered that the goals of this implementation plan were met through the inclusion of a positive, Deaf, adult, role model in the child's life such as was provided through school, socialization in the child's local Deaf community, and through the involvement in the family by a trained Deaf mentor (SKI-HI Institute, 1996). While a Deaf mentor program had been instituted at the school, until the implementation of this practicum, it was only available for the preschool age children and their families (J. Barry, September 8, 1997, personal communication). Responses from parents on the needs-assessment and the postimplementation survey in support of the Deaf mentor program were used to inform planning for the program implemented as well as suggest an expansion of this program to children of all ages served by the school.

While the above strategies were intended to be effective in overcoming barriers to communication between parents and children who are deaf, it was also recognized that just as each child has different needs and abilities to learn and communicate, so too, have his parents (Desselle, 1994). With the goal of facilitating communication and with the inclusion of sign-language as one of the basic tools for that task, programming for parents sought to build on the strength of existing communication tools including the use of

technical devices, interpretation services, and the use of signed, written, and verbalized language (Calderon & Greenberg, 1993).

Beginning with the barriers that were psychological in nature, work with parents of children who are deaf was addressed through the use of a variety of supports-- both educational and psycho-social. Unlike other situations where an adult might seek additional training, for parents of children who are deaf, sign-language instruction may be seen as both a solution as well as a solemn reminder of something for which they may feel shame or despair (Koester & Meadow-Orleans, 1990). Sensitive to the personal as well as the educational needs of the parent to be able to effectively communicate with the child, the work of Henderson & Hendershott (1991) was used to affirm how this setting can support both parent and child through the use of sign-language instruction, exposure to Deaf role models, and social-work services.

Discussion and Evaluation of Ideas Generated from the Literature

The right to self-determination in all aspects of adult education has been shown to be fundamental to the success of adult programming (Toth & Churchill, 1992). Research from the adult-learning field suggests that because association with past, negative, school-learning experiences can play a part in the willingness of adults to attend educational programming at a school, the issue of location must also be taken into consideration (TVOntario, 1989). For those parents who have shown involvement in other activities in the school, who live in the same geographical area, and are comfortable attending instruction held at the school, the use of the school facility was offered. For parents who preferred the privacy of their home, who would be willing to attend with a small group of

other parents in a community center, or study at another parent's home, efforts were made to accommodate that preference (D. Friesen, letter to parents, April 16, 1998). In both instances, the goal was to facilitate crossing any extraneous barriers that might be negatively associated with location.

The particular day of the week and time of day was also considered. Recognizing that parents are often faced with competing demands on their time, a choice of day of week as well as time of day was given in order to respect and accommodate the parent's need to meet their personal, family, and work obligations (J. Doull, personal communication, April 13, 1998). Based on a willingness of staff to allow such flexibility in scheduling, it was suggested that instruction be made available during both day and evening hours(D. Friesen and M. Beernink, personal communication, March 28, 1998). Like the choice of day, so too was consensus sought between instructors and parents relative to meeting hours.

The option to work at one's own pace within a class or privately using video and written materials was provided as another way of addressing the problem of participation in sign-language programming. Because sign-language, like any language, benefits from practical application with native users (Carver, 1991), programs were developed that included formal teaching by Deaf adults and practical application, in terms of socialization with members of the Deaf community. Cognizant of the benefits of learning in a group yet sensitive to the inadequacy some parents may feel, individualized and private programming was also offered on the request of parents and the agreement of Deaf adult mentors (Wasik, Bryant, & Lyons, 1990).

Support services which addressed the personal or family concerns of parents were also seen to hold possibilities in addressing the problem of attendance at classes of sign-language instruction (Calderon & Greenberg, 1993). While the intent to participate may have indeed been sincere, other concerns--such as the care of other children in the home, or difficulty in managing costs of the course, or transportation--were addressed. Working closely with the former coordinator of the sign-language instruction program and vice-principal of the external resource services program, social-work services were engaged to help parents work cooperatively with each other and to use community services available to meet the needs for childcare, cost of the course, or transportation.

Description of Selected Solutions

Based on the results of the data retrieved from the parent needs-assessment survey, a comprehensive plan was developed. With the goal of facilitating communication and with attention to the inclusion of sign-language as one of the basic tools for that task, programming for parents sought to build on the strength of existing communication tools including the use of technical devices, interpretation services, and the use of written and verbal language.

Noting comments received from the preimplementation needs-assessment survey, sensitivity was extended to those parents who had previously received instruction in a code of English, Manually Coded English (MCE) or signed English, and who preferred to continue to incorporate that method in their battery of communication tools (J. Barry, June 1, 1998). Respectful of a parent`s right to self-determine the means of communication with their child, the implementation plan sought to marry past strategies

with current philosophy and offered an additional means of communication to parents through the instruction of a recognized language of people who are Deaf, American Sign Language.

In an effort to increase awareness and credibility with hearing and Deaf parents, sign-language instruction programs were advertised openly and frequently. Because of limited funds, the good will of parents, Deaf mentors, the school and parent association, mediums such as the school newsletter, flyers sent home to parents, school workshops, personal phone invitations, and letters were used to accomplish this task. Sign-language instruction programs were developed to include the opportunity for individualized programming, work with both hearing and Deaf instructors within a class, or at home using video and written materials. Recognizing that some parents had already achieved some ability or had received some training in the use of sign-language, efforts were made to provide increasing levels of proficiency in sign-language training.

Just as adults may prefer to self-select a particular sign-language course, issues such as awareness of courses offered, choice of time, day, location, and availability of childcare and transportation were vetted with parents. Programs that teach sign-language were designed to be not only accessible but visible to parents of children who are deaf. Parents were encouraged to be actively involved in asking for and shaping the kind of sign-language training they wanted for themselves and under that encouragement, they subscribed, attended, and completed sign-language instruction programs offered through this school.

Sensitive to the psycho-social as well as the educational needs of parents to be

able to effectively communicate with their child, this school for the deaf was seen to have a unique opportunity to support both parent and child through the use of sign-language instruction, exposure to Deaf role models, and social-work services. The use of such tools as needs-assessments and surveys was initiated as a means of including parents in the process of identifying the most effective ways of improving communication with their child. Similarly, the means for parents to proceed at their own pace and level of sign-language instruction was encouraged through a flexible curriculum and schedule of classes. Working closely with the former coordinator of the sign-language instruction program, social-work services were engaged to help parents take advantage of community services available to meet the needs for childcare, cost of the course, and transportation needs that may have been contributing to the problem of attendance at classes of sign-language instruction.

Description of Leadership Plan During Implementation

Important from the onset of this practicum, leadership took on new meaning during the implementation phase as it sought to involve the stakeholders in the experience of solving the problem they had identified (J. Barry, personal communication, March 30, 1998). Having laid the groundwork for implementation in discussions held with the vice-principal of the external resource services program, the former sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator, a representative of the parent's association, and the practicum contact person over the past eight months, care was taken that continuity be maintained between the needs-assessment and the implementation phases with the proposed participants–the parents. In a letter sent out during the summer school break, parents were given a

summary of the results of the needs-assessment and were informed of the plan for sign-language instruction programs in the upcoming autumn. The parents were informed of the implementation phase of the practicum that would be initiated when school reconvened and invited to continue to lend their participation.

While leadership by this writer was clearly her responsibility, the process was, nevertheless, a collaborative one and involved the agreement for ongoing consultation with the writer on the delivery of the sign-language instruction program. Based on the rapport established during this process, the project team prepared for implementation by determining which of all the recommendations received would be most feasible, available, and affordable for implementation given the new school year and the lack of a designated staff person to coordinate such a program. An ordering of priorities served to address the problem and the writer worked to facilitate consensus on the ways and means the selected priorities were to be achieved.

Report of Action Taken

Serving to organize in a sequential and logical manner the problem-solving strategy as well as the means for ensuring analysis and feedback generated, a calendar plan was used throughout the implementation phase. The following will provide the reader with a report about what actually took place during this period. As will be seen, deviations from the original plan as well as roadblocks and difficulties were identified and discussed in order that those desiring to do so, might duplicate the solution presented here.

The implementation of this practicum required problem-solving of its own. While

a plan had been devised by the vice-principal of the external resource services program and the coordinator of sign-language instruction and Deaf culture, administrative changes called for creative strategies in order to meet the goals of the practicum. Though consents to proceed with the program had been returned in the stamped envelopes provided to parents, when school reconvened in the autumn, the program was without a coordinator.

Faced with the problem of how to implement a program without a coordinator, meetings were held with a number of stakeholders. In talking with the parent association president and those parents who made inquiry (D. Repay, personal communication, September 10, 1998), it was discerned that the desire to continue in some form of instruction was important. Deaf mentors originally matched were invited to continue their work with the families and the former sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator was approached for assistance in finding Deaf instructors so that at least a few courses could be provided for parents (D. Friesen, personal communication, October 5, 1998). Recognizing that this former coordinator had other work responsibilities, discussion with the vice-principal served to highlight this need and time was allotted for the former coordinator within her new job to secure instructors for four parent groups (J. Barry, personal communication, October 5, 1998). It was also decided that the teachers who had been previously recruited to instruct small groups or go into the homes and mentor the parents and families would be informed of the problem. While there would be no further recruiting, or training of teachers or Deaf mentors, if these instructors expressed the initiative to proceed, a modified program would be instituted. Supervision for the sign-language instruction programs would be done by the vice-principal. The former sign-

language coordinator would serve as a consultant to the extent that her new, full-time job would allow her to be of assistance. Sanctioned by the program director, this problem-solving strategy was set in motion.

In order to maintain the momentum established in the past year and intention indicated in the latest letter to parents about the sign-language program (see Appendix B), parent education in terms of the school policy and philosophy of the use of American Sign Language in the school was disseminated (see Appendix D). Consistent with the plan to improve the use of sign-language by the parents, it was felt that such an educational approach would pave the way for actual instruction once the position of sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator was filled. Having made these adjustments and concessions, the instructors agreed to provide the instruction for the three month implementation period.

To rekindle interest noted in the needs-assessment pretest, the writer attended opening sessions of four, 10-week sign-language instruction classes. Participants were thanked for the feedback that had formed the basis of the new programs and the opportunity was taken to answer questions about the implementation of this practicum under the new conditions imposed by the loss of the coordinator.

Contact with the vice-principal, the former coordinator, sign-language instructors and Deaf mentors continued. Given the revised plan of approach to providing sign-language instruction, the use of the school newsletter served as a weekly link with parents on the issues of the use of ASL, the ways they could improve their skills, and the programs available to them through the school or community (see Appendix E). Verbal

contact with the parent's association and the parents individually as seen by this social worker in the course of her work responsibilities at the school was also used to monitor response and address issues that surfaced in terms of developing communication between parents and their children through ASL.

A parent workshop scheduled for this point in the practicum was postponed due to unavailability of staff. It was determined that the program, as it had been presently created however, would be maintained. Consideration was given to holding a workshop once the sign-language instruction program coordinator was hired as a means of introducing the new coordinator as well as hearing from parents as to their experience and needs. The offer of a presentation by this writer to the parent association was accepted for consideration.

Though it was not possible to hold the parent workshop as planned, other opportunities to canvass parents and collect feedback were exploited. Accepting offers to speak at a Deaf parent workshop, attend the preschool division Christmas party, and mingle at a staff farewell party, this worker shared with staff and parents the objectives of the sign-language instruction program and received feedback as to the experience of these parents in terms of what they had found useful and what they considered would be the best approach to solving the problem of parents learning how to communicate with their children in sign-language.

Statistics kept by the former coordinator, feedback from parents and staff, as well as problems identified/solved/or needing solutions were collected. Once summarized, the information was shared as a mid-progress report to the project team. Given the positive

feedback received and expectation that the results would also support the further development of such programming once a person is hired to coordinate sign-language instruction programs, this feedback served as an important support for the strategy undertaken and validated the continuation of instruction to the end of the implementation period.

As the implementation period drew to a close, the postimplementation survey was approved, copied, and disseminated to all parents. Taking the opportunity to use the school newsletter, a notice was again placed in that organ and the survey was sent out to all parents. Due to changes in the schedules of two of the classes and bad weather on two other occasions, contact was made directly with the sign-language instructors and each was requested to remind their students of the need to complete the postimplementation surveys. Phone contact was made with the members of the groups as a final follow-up. Nine additional surveys were done by telephone and three in face-to-face interviews with the writer on the request of the parent. A notice of thanks was placed in the school newsletter with a reminder to parents to return the surveys (see Appendix H).

In the last week of implementation, individual meetings were held with the program director, vice-principal, former coordinator, and parent association representative. Ideas for implementation in future sign-language instruction programming were suggested and compiled for discussion at a future general resource department staff meeting. Amid these meetings, the vice-principal and program manager were pleased to announce that the new sign-language instruction/Deaf mentor lead had been hired. Though too late to be a part of the implementation of this practicum, the

hiring of this person gave support to the problem-solving strategies undertaken.

The follow-up to implementation occurred in the month after the formal implementation and data analysis took place. Based on the results (see Appendix I) and their implications for future service delivery, this report was written. The report, in turn, was shared with the program director, vice-principal of the external resource services program, former sign-language instruction and Deaf culture coordinator, a parent association representative, and the new sign-language instruction/Deaf mentor lead. Mindful of the integral support that was given by the project team and the parents who participated in the practicum, personal letters of thanks were written to all involved. As had been promised, an article was submitted to the school newsletter in order that the results of the survey and proposed direction of future programming be shared (see Appendix J).

While the larger problem of communication between parents and their children may not have been solved by the implementation of this practicum, it will be found that solutions for the problem–programs that teach American Sign Language, in the home, school or community, have been provided through a school for the deaf but are being used by less than half of the eligible parents–have been determined.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The goal of this practicum was that programs that teach American Sign Language, in the home, school, or community, are being used by parents whose children are Deaf and receiving services through the school. Toward this goal, four outcome measures were devised. The following will describe the results.

Outcome 1. A 10% increase in the number of parents who are aware of programs that teach sign-language, from 28 to 46 of the 184 eligible parents, as measured by a survey of all parents will be realized.

This outcome was met.

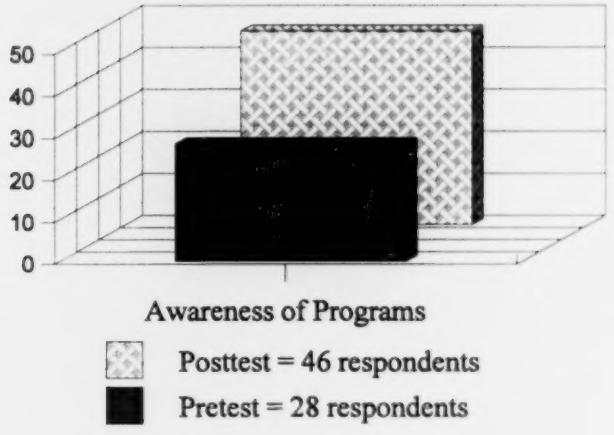

Figure 1. Number of Parents Aware of Sign-Language Programs.

While the stated outcome looked only for an increase in awareness of "at least one sign-language program", the increase may in reality have been much higher. As

noted in Appendix I, parents showed awareness not only in programs offered at the school, but also those offered in their communities, in parent homes, and through the help of a Deaf mentor. Out of 184 eligible parents a 10% increase was noted between responses to the pre- and postimplementation surveys. Compared to the 28 responses of the preimplementation survey, postimplementation responses numbered 46 (see Figure1).

Outcome 2. An increase in the number of eligible parents who are subscribing to programs that teach sign-language instruction will occur such that the minimum requirements of 6 to a maximum of 15 persons per class will be met, as measured by records kept by the sign-language instructors.

This outcome was met.

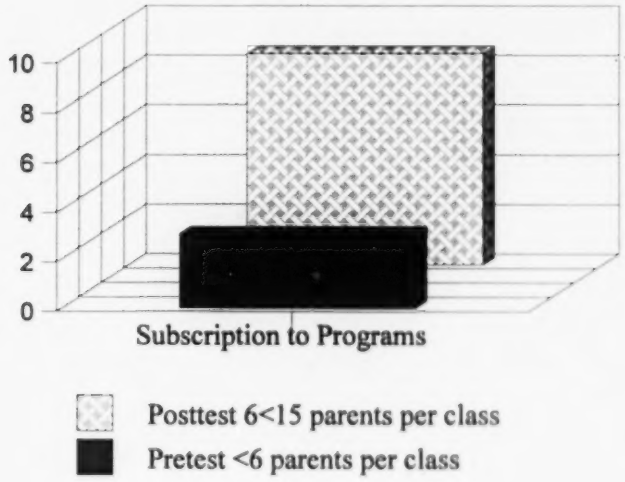

Figure 2. Number of Parents Subscribing to Sign-Language Programs.

In comparison to attendance noted in the presurvey of less than 6 and an average of 3 people, the postsurvey showed that the minimum requirements of 6 to a maximum of

15 people and an average of 8.5 attendees per class was attained (see Figure 2).

Outcome 3. A 10% increase in the number of parents who are using the sign-language instruction offered, from 21 to 39 of the 184 eligible parents, will be experienced as measured by data collected in the preimplementation needs-assessment survey (see Appendix A) and compared with data from the postimplementation parent needs-assessment survey (see Appendix C) administered to all parents.

This outcome was met.

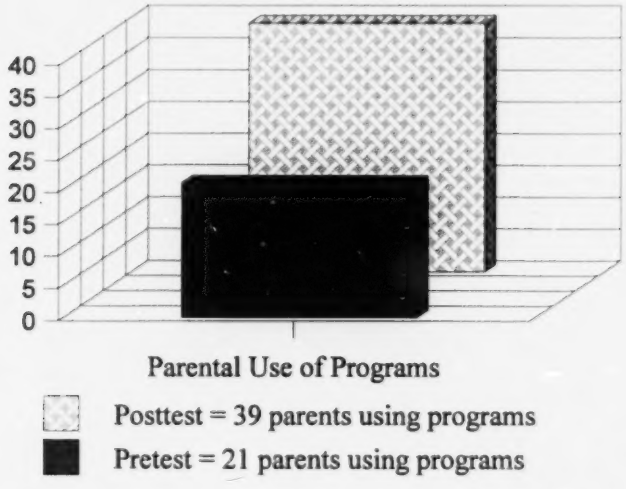

Figure 3. Number of Parents Using Sign-Language Programs.

In comparing data collected from the pre- and posttest surveys, the target of a 10% increase in usage was reached as parents were found to be using sign-language instruction programs offered (see Figure 3). An increase from 21 to 39 parents of the 184 eligible parents using the sign-language instruction classes offered was demonstrated (as measured by subscription, attendance, and completion statistics) between pre- and

postsurveys.

Outcome 4. Parents will be found to be actively involved in asking for, shaping, and contributing opinions as to the kind of sign-language instruction they want for themselves such that, when surveyed relative to their knowledge and ideas about how to improve present programs, there will be a 10% increase in responses between pre- and postsurveys from 28 to 46 of the 184 eligible parents.

This outcome was met.

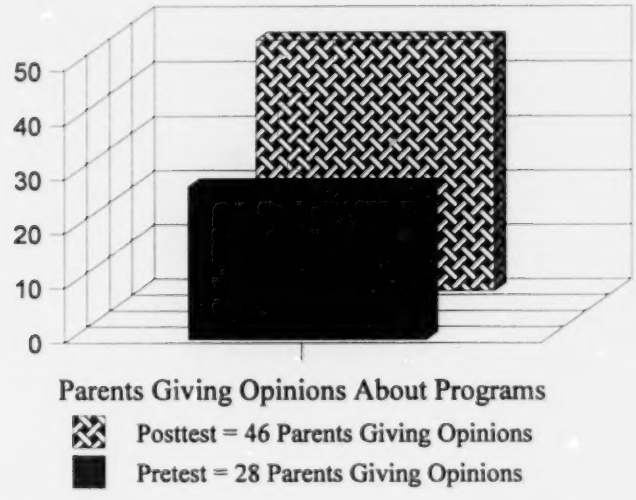

Figure 4. Number of Parents Giving Opinions About Sign-Language Programs.

Though records showed evidence of awareness of programs, adequate class size, and participation at sign-language instruction classes, the final objective was met with a 10% increase in the number of parents actively involved in asking for, shaping, and contributing opinions as to the kind of sign-language instruction they wanted for themselves (see Figure 4). As recorded in Appendix I, responses to questions #10, 11,

12, and 13 in the postsurvey, were found to support and augment suggestions made in the presurvey. While the presurvey had provided commentary on the experience of parents who had become aware of and/or had used programs, responses received in the postsurvey gave evidence of the additional intention of parents to shape, influence, and participate in future sign-language instruction programming.

Discussion

Using the calendar plan drafted in the proposal as a guide, this practicum was implemented. Delayed by the lack of personnel to implement the program of sign-language instruction, ideas were drawn from meetings with the research project team in the first 3 weeks. Though it became clear that the exact program described in the practicum could not be provided at that time, because of the expressed interest of parents and the willingness of former staff, instructors, and Deaf mentors to have a sign-language instruction program, ways were devised to meet the most pressing needs and most evident commitment that had been identified by staff and parents in the preimplementation survey.

To facilitate responses the writer attended meetings of parents for classes, school workshops, and socials. Surveys were made available in these forums as well as the opportunity for parents to provide verbal or signed feedback to the sign-language instruction programs provided by the school.

Efforts were made to build on the momentum from the preimplementation survey and decisions made by the school relative to its philosophy of a bilingual/bicultural learning environment. Beginning with a letter sent to parents that summarized the

findings of the preimplementation survey (see Appendix B), a series on the philosophy of the school's use of American Sign Language (ASL) were incorporated into the weekly school newsletters (see Appendix D).

What resulted was the establishment of sign-language instruction classes in three key areas of the catchment region (see Appendix E). To meet and challenge skill levels of participants, the level of instruction was diversified. Furthermore, parents were invited to include other children in the home or their circle of friends in an effort to not only boost numbers but also create a more self-supporting environment for the development of communication between the child who is Deaf and significant others in his life.

For those who had been involved in the Deaf mentor program, three Deaf mentors came forward and offered their services to the six families who had been matched to them under the former program. A training day was offered to interested Deaf adults, November 6, 1998, and two additional Deaf adults, received training for future matches (J. Barry, personal communication, November 9, 1998).

The implementation of this practicum took a circuitous route toward its goals. Based on assumptions that the fundamental program of sign-language instruction would be in operation, the initial proposal was developed. Unfortunately, a new school year and fiscal restraints found a program with only meager financial resources and no coordinator to run the programs.

Consultation through meetings with the research project team, the parent association, the sign-language instruction teachers, and Deaf mentors, found interest as well as support for the pursuit of a person to develop and coordinate the sign-language

programs. Though small in numbers and somewhat frustrated by the lack of programs available, parents agreed to participate in the sign-language instruction program (ASL classes and the Deaf mentor program), and this research project as outlined by the letter and consent distributed (see Appendix C). While different in terms of number of responses and ideas generated, the data synthesis provided in Appendix I gives evidence of how the surveys served to identify usage and problems as much as they solicited opinion and possible solutions.

Recommendations

In reviewing feedback given by the parents, it has become evident that more parents have gained knowledge of not only the existence of programs but in addition, their need for them. Possibly as their awareness of the programs available and their own sense of what they need to be able to communicate effectively with their child has increased, the parents have also become discriminating in their choice of instruction. Just as responses have noted difficulty in participation in sign-language instruction due to problems in location, scheduling, and childcare, so too have parents discriminated as to the kind of instruction they want for themselves. Asking for varying levels of difficulty in instruction and a variable schedule of location and time of day, parents have opted for having classes that are geographically convenient and in the form of small groups, or family-centered with the use of a Deaf mentor.

While ASL has been deemed the language of instruction through the air and English as the language of literacy at this school, it has been noted that there are still parents who, having learned how to communicate with their children in signed English,

prefer to continue to use that code of English instead of learning how to use ASL. Though it is likely that the philosophical debate will continue, it is with an attitude of respect for all parents who find a way to successfully communicate with their children that this paper concludes.

Dissemination

Despite the difficulties encountered in terms of staffing and funding, interest rallied to support the new initiatives taken. Cooperation of administrative, teaching, and office staff served to fuel the determination to problem-solve. Support for the dissemination of the project results was given in the form of access to the writer to keep the school population abreast of developments through staff meetings, the school newsletter, and presentations to participants in the sign-language instruction program.

In addition, and as a justification for pursuit of the necessary staff to develop and coordinate the sign-language instruction program, the school administrator posted and has now hired a person to take on the responsibility for developing the sign-language instruction program including supervising the Deaf mentor program (J. Barry, personal communication, January 4, 1999). While it may be that some pressure has been exerted in order keep a commitment to the practicum determined, it is evident that there has been real and focused pressure exerted by parents and staff who have raised concerns that the sign-language instruction program–in any form and under any ad hoc leadership–be realized.

As a future goal and with the necessary administrative permissions received, it is planned that the results of this practicum will be used to influence further program

development at both this school as well as other programs involved in providing services to children who are deaf and their families. Toward this end, a submission was made and accepted. To the credit of the school, the writer has been given the time to share what she has learned. On February 2, 1999, the writer will give a presentation that will include the findings of this practicum at the 15th Annual Pacific Rim Conference on Disabilities: Creating the Future for Individuals with Disabilities in the New Millennium.

The preceding has provided an overview of the difficulties addressed and problem-solving achieved as this practicum has been implemented. At the conclusion of a practicum that has taken on a life of its own, the old adage of "necessity being the mother of invention", has been found to hold substance. Without the expected leadership of a designated staff coordinator, the needs and determination of parents and staff to make change has harnessed resources and produced its own leadership.

Though the goal had to be re-thought and tuned to meet the actual needs and resources available, as a result of this attention to detail, programs that teach ASL, in the home, school, or community, are being used by parents whose children are Deaf and receiving services through the school. Given the support received to overcome obstacles in this practicum, there is every reason to believe that the way in which problems have been solved will auger well for the continued growth and success of programs offered.

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Appendices

Appendix A

The Sign-Language Instruction Program Survey For Parents

(Preimplementation Needs-Assessment)

May 1, 1998.

Dear Parents:

I am interested in learning about your experience with the sign-language instruction program offered by this school–what you have found helpful, not helpful, or would suggest as an improvement. While the school offers a number of ways of learning American Sign Language (ASL), records show that these are used by less than half of the eligible parents.

I need your help to find out why. For this purpose, I am asking that each parent complete a survey and return it to me in the stamped envelope attached. Your input will allow you to have a say in what programs are offered in the future.

It is your choice as to whether you sign the survey. However, if you have questions about the survey or would like to provide your response in a face-to-face interview, please contact me at the above address, by telephone, TTY, or fax. In order to respect confidentiality, your names will not appear in any report that follows.

So that consideration can be given for any changes needed in the next term, I would appreciate receiving your response by May 31, 1998. As a way of recognizing the effort you take to complete this survey, a summary of your feedback will be published in the next school newsletter. Thank you for your participation!

Sincerely,

Social Worker,
Resource Services.

Vice-Principal,
External Resource Services Program.

cc. Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator

THE SIGN-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM SURVEY FOR PARENTS
(Preimplementation Needs-Assessment)

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Dear Parents: Please answer the following questions as fully as possible. You may write additional comments in the margins if you wish to expand on your answer. Thank you for taking the time to share your experience and suggestions!

~~~~~~

Name of Parent completing survey:_____
(optional)

1. In terms of your relationship with your child, what has been the best way you have found to communicate?

2. What has been the least effective way of communicating with your child?

3. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your ability to communicate with your child? (Please circle one.)

1	2	3	4	5
with a lot of difficulty				with no difficulty

4. What do you believe would be the best way to improve your communication with your child?

5. If you communicate with your child through sign-language, how did you learn this language? (Circle all that apply.)

If you do not communicate with your child through sign-language, please go to question 6.

a) by being Deaf myself
b) by being taught by my child
c) by being taught by another family member
d) by being taught by friends
e) by being taught by a Deaf mentor from the school
f) by taking courses in my home or the school
g) by taking courses offered by a community college or university
h) other (please describe)_____

6. The school offers a number of programs and classes in American Sign Language but these are not used by very many parents. It is important to us to find out why. On a scale from 1-5, please rate each of the following reasons in terms of how important they are to you. (Please circle one.)

a) classes held at the school

1 2 3 4 5
not at all important very important

b) classes held at my home

1 2 3 4 5
not at all important very important

c) classes held at a community center

1 2 3 4 5
not at all important very important

d) classes which use video tapes and books that I can take home

1 2 3 4 5
not at all important very important

e) personal instruction in my home with my child and a Deaf mentor

1 2 3 4 5
not at all important very important

7. Of the various forms of sign-language instruction you have been able to use in the past school year, how helpful have you found them? (Please circle one.)

a) classes held at the school

1 2 3 4 5

least helpful most helpful

b) classes held at my home

1 2 3 4 5

least helpful most helpful

c) classes held at a community center

1 2 3 4 5

least helpful most helpful

d) personal instruction in my home with my child and a Deaf mentor

1 2 3 4 5

least helpful most helpful

8. Of the various forms of sign-language instruction available, please rate how likely you would be to attend the following in the next school year? (Please circle one.)

a) classes held at the school

1 2 3 4 5

least likely most likely

b) classes held at my home

1 2 3 4 5

least likely most likely

c) classes held at a community center

1 2 3 4 5

least likely most likely

d) classes that use video tapes and books that I can take home

1 2 3 4 5

least likely most likely

e) personal instruction in my home with my child and a Deaf mentor

1 2 3 4 5

least likely most likely

9. What do you consider to be the barriers to you taking sign-language courses? (Please circle all that apply.)

a) I already know and use sign-language with my child.
b) My child has difficulty signing.
c) My child prefers to use his voice.
d) My child is learning how to use his voice and needs to practice speaking not signing.
e) The courses are at times when I cannot attend.
f) I do not have child care for the times I want to go to class.
g) I did not know about the programs.
h) The courses are too basic for me.
i) The courses are too difficult for me.
j) The courses are too expensive.
k) I only see my child on weekends and holidays and we get along just fine with voice and gestures
l) Other(please describe)_____

10. What improvements would you like to see to the existing programs?

--change the location of the classes? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes in the day? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes in the afternoon? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes in the evening? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes on the weekend ? yes_____ no_____

--make childcare available? yes_____ no_____

--provide instruction to your other children? yes_____ no_____

--transportation to and from classes? yes_____ no_____

--hold sign-language classes for yourself and other parents in your home? yes_____ no_____

--have a Deaf mentor (a Deaf adult) work with you and your child in your home to learn sign-language? yes_____ no_____

11. If new programs were developed to teach parents sign-language, what kind of programs do you think would be most helpful?

12. What would be the best way to let parents know about the new programs?

13. What would be the best way to get parents to attend the programs?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. You will find a summary of all the feedback in the June school newsletter.

Please return this survey to me in the attached, stamped envelope by May 31, 1998.
Thank you for your help!

Appendix B

The Letter to Parents Based on Responses Received from the Needs-Assessment Survey

July 14, 1998.

Dear Parents:

Further to the survey I sent you in May, I am writing to thank you for your responses. While I have been able to talk with some of you on the phone, because it is summer vacation time, I did not want to miss following up with you. Your input has been insightful and will be used to shape sign language instruction programs when we return to school in the fall.

From those of you who responded, I was pleased to learn of your successes in finding ways to communicate with your child. Of course there are many ways of communicating–not just through American Sign Language–and your examples of use of Signed English, gestures, lipreading, and verbalizations, in addition to ASL, showed how important communication is between you and your child.

Many of you also told us that you had enjoyed the help of a Deaf mentor and we hope to be able to expand that program beyond the preschool level when availability of dollars and more Deaf mentors can be secured. For those of you who are looking to have more advanced ASL classes, we will be looking for teachers and numbers of parents to make it possible to hold those classes. We need a minimum of 6 to a maximum of 15 to be able to hold a class. Consideration for teaching siblings, convenience of location, ways of managing transportation, and day care were also issues you raised that we will be addressing.

I look forward to informing you about upcoming changes in the fall. Until then, I hope you have a safe and relaxing summer.

Sincerely,

Social Worker.
cc. Vice-Principal, External Resource Services Program
Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator

Appendix C

The Covering Letter to Parents and the Consent Form

September 1, 1998.

Dear Parents:

Welcome to a new school year! By this time you will have received the summary of the responses received from the survey that asked you to tell us about your use of the sign-language instruction programs offered by the school. We appreciated the time you took to tell us about your use of the programs. Your suggestions about how we can enhance the programs and help you improve your skill in the use of American Sign Language were useful. We hope you like the changes we have made in terms of location, time of day, day of week, and consideration for travel and childcare.

We have also heard your request for more challenging programming. Following the basic levels we have provided in the past, we will also be providing a more advanced level of instruction that will be given by a trained Deaf teacher. The Deaf mentor program will again be available to families who wish to receive instruction in terms of language and Deaf culture in their homes.

As the next phase of this research project, I would like you to complete the attached consent form, keep a copy for yourself and return the other to me in the enclosed, stamped envelope. This will signify that you are willing to participate in the revised sign-language instruction program. At the end of your classes, I will ask you to give me feedback on your experience by completing another survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and I will only be reporting on the sum, not the individual, responses I receive.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in shaping and directing the sign-language instruction program offered at our school. I look forward to meeting you at your first class and to answering any of your questions about this research project.

Sincerely,

Social Worker.
cc. Vice-Principal, External Resource Services Program
Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator

THE SIGN-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM SURVEY FOR PARENTS

CONSENT FORM

Title: IMPROVING THE DELIVERY OF THE SIGN-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM FOR PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF AND RECEIVING SERVICES FROM A SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF

Investigator: Anne Toth, M.S.W., C.S.W., Ed.D. Candidate, Nova Southeastern University, (123)456-7890

School Staff: Vice-Principal, External Resource Services Program, The School for the Deaf, (123)456-7890

Former Sign-Language and Deaf Culture Coordinator, The School for the Deaf, TTY (123)456-7890

Program Director, Resource Services Program, The School for the Deaf, (123)456-7890

Institutional Review Board, Office of Grants and Contracts, Nova Southeastern University, (954) 262-5369

Description: The School for the deaf is participating in a research project concerning how best to improve sign-language instruction programs offered by this school. This research is being performed by Anne Toth, social worker of the school. Because you are a parent of a child who is deaf and are receiving services from this school, you are being invited to take part in this research project. The research includes three components: (1) a preimplementation needs-assessment survey, (2) participation in the implementation of sign-language instruction programming September 1998 to January 1999, and (3) a postimplementation assessment survey.

If you choose to participate, the programming will be 2 hours weekly for 10 weeks; the survey will take about 20 minutes to complete.

Risks and Benefits: By participating in this research project, you will have the opportunity to improve your skills in the use of American Sign Language. Furthermore, you may also discover increased ability to communicate with your child in sign-language. The information we gain from this study will be used to improve the sign-language instruction program for all families receiving services from this school.

If you have any concerns about your participation in the study, you can discuss them with the vice-principal of the external resource services program, the former sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator at the school, or the IRB office, at the numbers listed above.

Costs and Payments: There is no payment provided. The choice to participate is strictly voluntary.

Confidentiality: Strict confidentiality will be maintained at all times throughout the course of the research project. A random code number, rather than your name, will be used to identify information you give to us. Signing your name to the survey is optional and only members of the immediate project staff will have direct access to this information. Reports at scientific meetings or in scientific journals will not include any information which identifies you as a participant in this study. There is, however, one exception to confidentiality that you should know about. Your research records, just like clinic records, may be subpoenaed by court or may be inspected by provincial regulatory authorities.

Right to Withdraw: You may choose to not participate or to stop participation in the research program at any time without penalty or loss of services from the school. If you choose to not participate, the information collected about you will be destroyed.

Voluntary Consent: Participation in this research project is totally voluntary, and your consent is required before you can participate in the research program.

I have read the receding consent form, or it has been read to me, and I understand its contents. All of my questions concerning the research have been answered. I hereby agree to participate in this research study. If I have any questions in the future about this study they will be answered by the investigator and staff listed above. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Participant's
Signature:_____Date:_____

Witness's
Signature:_____Date:_____

Appendix D

School Newsletter Sample

Sample of School Newsletter Question and Answer Article

Communication Policy
Q & A's

As of September 1, 1998, the School for the deaf implemented a bilingual/bicultural philosophy of education by designating ASL as the language of instruction through the air and English as the language of literacy. This means that Signed English will no longer be used for instruction. Please share your questions about communication with us.

Q: My child is learning ASL in school and knows more than me. How will I be able to communicate with my child as learning ASL is not easy for me?

A: Don't feel guilty that your ASL skills are not at a high level yet. The fact that you are trying to learn ASL will show your child that you value their language. Your child will help you develop ASL skills. As a parent, you have many skills and your children require that you be a loving parent first and foremost.

Using gestures, dramatization, facial expression, pictures and the signs that you know will ensure a basic level of communication. Take advantage of the Deaf mentor program and become active in the Deaf community. Participating in sign classes will ensure that your skills continue to develop.

The bottom line is find a way to communicate with your child. Learning another language takes time and patience.

Q: How will families of the school's students learn ASL?

A: The school for the deaf now provides weeknight classes to families of students at a low cost. ASL classes are also offered at several universities, community colleges, community centers and churches.

Appendix E

Sign-Language Instruction Notice Sample

ASL CLASSES

SIGN-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION PROGRAM

Beginning Level Sign-Language Instruction

When: Thursdays
November 5, 12, 19, 26, 1998, December 3, 10, 17, 1998, January 7, 14, 21, 1999

Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Instructor: J. S.

==========

Intermediate Level Sign-Language Instruction

When: Wednesdays
November 4, 11, 18, 25, 1998, December 2, 9, 16, 1998, January 6, 13, 20, 1999

Time: 7:00-9:00 p.m.

Where: The School for the Deaf

Instructor: J. S.

==========

Cost

$30.00 per person for 10 weeks or $40.00 per couple for 10 weeks

==========

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the former sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator. at 519-123-4567, ext. 123.

Appendix F

The Follow-Up Memorandum to School Administrators and Parents Regarding the Results of the Preimplementation Survey and Planning for the Sign-Language Instruction Program

MEMORANDUM

Date: October 7, 1998

To: Principal, The School for the Deaf
Vice-Principal, External Resource Services Program
Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator

Re: Follow-up to ASL Survey and Planning for Fall Sign-Language Instruction

Dear :

I am writing to follow-up on my discussions with you relative to the research we have begun on the use and development of the sign-language instruction program. Due to the fact that a person has not yet been hired to coordinate this program, you will note changes I have made since my last draft of the letter to parents and consent form. Though our program is not utilizing all the suggestions received from parents in the preimplementation survey, the demand for the program has made it possible to continue to provide what is seen by our families to be a valued service.

Despite the unexpected staffing problems, I would like to recognize the efforts taken by each of you to respond to requests by parents for help in understanding the new communication policy and their interest in continuing with instruction in ASL and in the use of the Deaf mentor program. This has been a vital link with our former survey and what we hope can be developed in terms of services to children and their families.

As you are aware parents have been informed of the results of the preimplementation survey and a number have given their consent to participate in the postimplementation survey. The attached letter will be sent out to all parents in the preschool and school program receiving services from our school.

Thank you. I look forward to receiving your permission to proceed with this mailing and to working with you on this project.

Sincerely,

Social Worker.
cc. Program Director, Resource Services Program.

October 7, 1998.

Dear Parents:

Welcome to a new school year! By this time you will have received the summary of the responses received from the survey that asked you to tell us about your use of the sign-language instruction programs offered by the school. We appreciated the time you took to tell us about your use of the programs and your suggestions as to how we can enhance the programs to help you improve your skill in the use of American Sign Language (ASL). To better put those ideas to work, in the near future, we are expecting that someone will be hired to further develop the sign-language instruction program.

In the meantime, and in keeping with our efforts to keep the lines of communication open with you, we have published a "Communication Policy Q & A" column in our school newsletter. Since September 1, 1998, the school for the deaf has implemented a bi/bi philosophy of education by designating ASL as the language of instruction through the air and English as the language of literacy. While this means that Signed English will no longer be used for instruction, we respect that you, as parents will have your own philosophy about how best to communicate with your child. The column is a way for us to share and address the questions you have raised about this important issue.

To meet your interest and requests, you will note we have arranged for sign-language classes in L., P., and K. We have also heard your request for more challenging programming. In addition to the basic level we have provided in the past, we will also be providing a more advanced level of instruction that will be given by a trained Deaf teacher. The Deaf mentor program has again been made available to families who wish to receive instruction in terms of language and Deaf culture in their homes.

As the next phase of our research project, I would like you to complete the attached consent form, keep a copy for yourself and return the other to me in the enclosed, stamped envelope. This will signify that you are willing to participate in the revised sign-language instruction program. At the end of your classes, I will ask you to give me feedback on your experience by completing another survey. Your responses will be kept confidential and I will only be reporting on the sum, not the individual, responses I receive.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in shaping and directing the sign-language instruction program offered at our school. I look forward to meeting you in class and to answering any of your questions about this research project. You may also contact me by telephone, TTY, mail, or ask to meet with me at the school or your home.

Sincerely,

Social Worker.

cc. Principal, The School for the Deaf,
Vice-Principal, External Resource Services Program
Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator
Program Director, Resource Services Program

Appendix G

The Letter to Parents and the Sign-Language Instruction Program Survey For Parents

(Postimplementation Assessment)

December 14, 1998.

Dear Parents:

Thank you for participating in the sign-language instruction programs offered by this school. As you will have noticed from the programs we initiated this fall, the feedback you gave us in the spring survey was put to use. Now that we have made some changes and you have had the opportunity to be involved in the programs, I am interested in learning about your experience with the sign-language instruction program offered by this school–what you have found helpful, not helpful, or would suggest as an improvement. We would like to know what made the most difference and what we still can do to make the programs even better.

For this purpose, I am asking that each parent complete a survey and return it to me in the envelope attached. Your input will allow you to have a say in what programs are offered in the future.

As before, it is your choice as to whether you sign the survey. However, if you have questions about the survey or would like to provide your response in a face-to-face interview, please contact me at the above address, by telephone, TTY, or fax. In order to respect confidentiality, your names will not appear in any report that follows.

So that consideration can be given for any changes needed in the next term, I would appreciate receiving your response by January 8, 1999. As a way of recognizing the effort you take to complete this survey, a summary of your feedback will be published in the school newsletter. Thank you for your participation. All the best to you in the New Year!

Sincerely,

Social Worker,
Resource Services Program

Vice-Principal,
External Resource Services Program.

cc. Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator

THE SIGN-LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION-PROGRAM SURVEY FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents: Please answer the following questions as fully as possible. You may write additional comments in the margins if you wish to expand on your answer. Thank you for taking the time to share your experience and suggestions!

~~~~~~

Name of Parent completing survey: _____
(optional)

1. In terms of your relationship with your child, what has been the best way you have found to communicate?

2. What has been the least effective way of communicating with your child?

3. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your ability to communicate with your child? (Please circle one.)

1	2	3	4	5
with a lot of difficulty				with no difficulty

4. What do you believe would be the best way to improve your communication with your child?
~~~~~~

5. If you communicate with your child through sign-language, how did you learn this language? (Circle all that apply.)

If you do not communicate with your child through sign-language, please go to question 6.

a) by being Deaf myself
b) by being taught by my child
c) by being taught by another family member
d) by being taught by friends
e) by being taught by a Deaf mentor from the school
f) by taking courses in my home or the school
g) by taking courses offered by a community college or university
h) other (please describe)_____

6. The school offers a number of programs and classes in American Sign Language. On a scale from 1-5, please rate each of the following reasons in terms of how important they are to you. (Please circle one.)

a) classes held at the school

1	2	3	4	5
not at all important				very important

b) classes held at my home

1	2	3	4	5
not at all important				very important

c) classes held at a community center

1	2	3	4	5
not at all important				very important

d) classes which use video tapes and books that I can take home

1	2	3	4	5
not at all important				very important

e) personal instruction in my home with my child and a Deaf mentor

1	2	3	4	5
not at all important				very important

7. Of the various forms of sign-language instruction you have been able to use this school year, how helpful have you found them? (Please circle one.)

a) classes held at the school

1 2 3 4 5
least helpful most helpful

b) classes held at my home

1 2 3 4 5
least helpful most helpful

c) classes held at a community center

1 2 3 4 5
least helpful most helpful

d) personal instruction in my home with my child and a Deaf mentor

1 2 3 4 5
least helpful most helpful

8. Of the various forms of sign-language instruction available, please rate how likely you would be to attend the following in the next school term? (Please circle one.)

a) classes held at the school

1 2 3 4 5
least likely most likely

b) classes held at my home

1 2 3 4 5
least likely most likely

c) classes held at a community center

1 2 3 4 5
least likely most likely

d) classes that use video tapes and books that I can take home

1 2 3 4 5
least likely most likely

e) personal instruction in my home with my child and a Deaf mentor

1 2 3 4 5
least likely most likely

9. What do you consider to be the barriers to you taking sign-language courses? (Please circle all that apply.)

a) I already know and use sign-language with my child.
b) My child has difficulty signing.
c) My child prefers to use his voice.
d) My child is learning how to use his voice and needs to practice speaking not signing.
e) The courses are at times when I cannot attend.
f) I do not have child care for the times I want to go to class.
g) I did not know about the programs.
h) The courses are too basic for me.
i) The courses are too difficult for me.
j) The courses are too expensive.
k) I only see my child on weekends and holidays and we get along just fine with voice and gestures
l) Other(please describe)_____

10. What improvements would you like to see to the existing programs?

--change the location of the classes? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes in the day? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes in the afternoon? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes in the evening? yes_____ no_____

--hold the classes on the weekend ? yes_____ no_____

--make childcare available? yes_____ no_____

--provide instruction to your other children? yes_____ no_____

--transportation to and from classes? yes_____ no_____

--hold sign-language classes for yourself and other parents in your home? yes_____ no_____

--have a Deaf mentor (a Deaf adult) work with you and your child in your home to learn sign-language? yes_____ no_____

11. If new programs were developed to teach parents sign-language, what kind of programs do you think would be most helpful?

12. What would be the best way to let parents know about the new programs?

13. What would be the best way to get parents to attend the programs?

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. You will find a summary of all the feedback in the school newsletter.

Please return this survey to me in the attached envelope by January 8, 1999. Thank you for your help!

Appendix H

The Reminder to Parents to Return Their Surveys

The Reminder to Parents to Return Their Surveys

Dear Parents,

Happy New Year! I hope you all had safe and restful holidays. It is good to see the children back at school–we missed them!

Thank you for returning your surveys about the sign-language programs. I know it is a busy time of year but your responses help us make changes and improve our programs.

For any of you who have not yet sent in your survey, please do so as soon as possible. Or, if you would prefer, I would be happy to talk with you over the phone or TTY.

Thanks for your help!

Social Worker.

Appendix I

The Synthesis of Data Compiled from the Pre- and Postimplementation Survey Results

The Synthesis of Data Compiled from the Pre- and Postimplementation Survey Results

N Pre-and Postsurvey = 184

1. In terms of your relationship with your child, what has been the best way you have found to communicate?

1. 21 of the 28 respondents indicated their use of "sign language". Of these, 6 specified their use of signed English. 7 of the 28 indicated that they communicated with their child using gestures, lipreading, writing, and voicing.	1. 40 of the 46 respondents reported that they had found the best way to communicate with their child was through the use of "sign language". Of these, 34 specified their use of ASL and 6 identified signed English as the code of language used. 35 of the 46 specified their use of gestures, lipreading, writing, and voicing in addition to attempts to communicate through "sign language".

2. What has been the least effective way of communicating with your child?

2. Of the 28 respondents, 15 stated that the least effective way to communicate with their children was through oral methods of speech and lipreading. This was followed by the use of written English. The comment was made by one respondent that finding methods varied with the receptivity of the child–sometimes the child turned off her hearing aids or closed her eyes and did not want to communicate. The comment "Any form of communicating is better than no communication. When you limit your ways of communication you limit communication" was recorded here.	2. Of the 46 respondents, 38 stated that the least effective way to communicate with their children was through oral methods that did not include visual cues such as signs, gestures, or lipreading. The remaining 8 of the responding group did not comment on this question.

3. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your ability to communicate with your child?

3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being with a lot of difficulty and 5 reflecting with no difficulty, respondents indicated that though their ability to communicate with their children was affected by the variation from time to time of their children's hearing, 24 of the 28 respondents indicated their belief that they communicated from an average to above average level with 8 #3, 12 #4, and 4 #5 self rating scores. Only 2 labeled themselves at #2. No one selected #1 to represent their level of difficulty in communicating with their children.	3. On a scale of 1-5, with 1 representing "a lot of difficulty" and 5 representing " "with no difficulty", 40 of the 46 respondents declared that they communicated with their children from an average to an above average level. Specifically, this was shown in numbers of 18 #3, 19 #4, and 6 #5 on the self-rated score. Only 1 respondent left this question blank.

4. What do you believe would be the best way to improve your communication with your child?

4. Of the 28 respondents, 15 expressed a belief that an increase in their ability to communicate with their child using sign language would be the best way to improve their communication with their child. In addition to the learning of productive and receptive skills in sign language, these respondents also commented on the importance of patience, the inclusion of a Deaf adult, and the teaching of family members sign language. Six other responses focused on improving auditory functioning through assistive devices, auditory/speech therapy and/or surgical procedure (ie. a cochlear implant). One did not respond.	4. Of the 46 respondents, 40 indicated a desire to have more sign language instruction. Four expressed a belief that the best way to improve communication would be to practice signing in real-life situations with the assistance of Deaf mentors and other Deaf adults and Deaf children, was seen as an important addition to more sign language classes. As one respondent underlined, she wanted to improve her abilities in sign language not just for surface conversations, but for real communication about everything and anything with her child. Four respondents indicated that did not need to improve their communication. Two respondents did not make a response.

5. If you communicate with your child through sign language, how did you learn this language?

5. For those of the 28 respondents who communicate using sign-language, 14 indicated they had been taught by taking sign-language courses in the school or their home, 13 indicated they had been taught by their child, 5 increased their knowledge through instruction by friends, and 5 were taught by a Deaf mentor. Three other persons indicated having taken courses from community teachers, Canadian Hearing Society, or a local community college. Resources such as books, videotapes, and helping out in a classroom at the school for the deaf were other strategies that were checked on the scale by 5 people. One person did not respond. One respondent indicated that he and his wife had started to hold signed English classes in their home to help parents interested in improving their skills.	5. Of the 46 respondents who identified their use of sign-language as a means of communicating with their child, 29 indicated they had been taught by taking sign-language courses in the school or their home, 24 indicated they had been taught by their child, 12 stated they had increased their knowledge through instruction by friends and a Deaf mentor. Five persons indicated that they had taken courses from community teachers, CHS, or a local community college. Resources such as books, videotapes, participating in the school activities (ie. Helping in the classroom and going on class trips) were also identified by 11 as ways they had improved their communication in sign language.

6. The school offers a number of programs and classes in American Sign Language but these are not used by very many parents. It is important to us to find out why. On a scale from 1-5, please rate each of the following reasons in terms of how important they are to you.

6. When asked the reasons for not using the sign-language instruction program offered by the school, 3 of the 28 respondents indicated that their preference was for signed English over ASL. Three additional respondents indicated their interest in pursuing an oral method, one of these was considering a cochlear implant for her child. Of the remaining number the opinion was divided with 8 in favor of programs being held at the school and 13 in a community center (center for the Deaf or church)or the parent's home. Proximity to sign-language instruction was sited as the determining factor for the choice of location. Classes that used videotapes and books that could be taken home was favoured favoured by 14 people. Fifteen respondents indicated their opinion that it was very important to have personal instruction in their home with their child and a Deaf mentor.	6. When asked the reasons for not using the sign-language instruction program offered by the school, 6 of the 46 respondents declared that they were not in agreement with the use of ASL and specified their preference for signed English. Of the remaining number, 30 favored programs being delivered in the home with Deaf mentors. Classes that used video tapes and books that could be taken home was indicated by 18 people. Programs that were held in the home were attractive to 25 people, in a community center (19 people), and 16 people indicated their opinion that holding courses in the school was important.

7. Of the various forms of sign language instruction you have been able to use in the past school year, how helpful have you found them?

7. Of the 28 respondents, 4 indicated use of school programs, 4 said they had taken advantage of programs in their home, 2 reported attending classes in a community center and 3 indicated their use of a Deaf mentor in their home. Comments that parents had not known about the availability of classes, were busy with other parent association matters, had difficulty with location due to distance, or were not interested in classes since the change from signed English to ASL, were noted.	7. Of the 46 respondents who found programs moderately (#3) to most helpful (#5), 16 indicated the use of school programs, 12 said they had taken advantage of programs in their home, 10 reported attending classes in a community center, and 6 indicated their use of a Deaf mentor in their home. Four respondents indicated they did not use school programs because of their preference for signed English. One respondent indicated they do not use sign-language with their child.

8. Of the various forms of sign language instruction available, please rate how likely you would be to attend the following in the next school year?

8. Of the 28 respondents, 7 indicated a likelihood of attending programs offered at the school, 11 in their homes, 9 in their community centers, 10 using tapes and books that could be taken home, 9 in their homes with a Deaf mentor. Comments indicated that attendance would be affected by the convenience in location because of transportation and time that the class was offered due to other childcare responsibilities. In addition, an increased number of participants and level of skill required (and offered) was considered to be a factor to the extent the respondents thought they would attend classes in the next year.	8. Of the 46 respondents, 18 indicated a likelihood of attending programs offered at the school, 22 in their homes, 12 in community centers, 14 using tapes and books that could be taken home, and 24 in their homes with a Deaf mentor. Comments indicated that attendance would be affected by the cost of the course, location, level of skill development available, childcare, and transportation factors.

9. What do you consider to be the barriers to you taking sign language courses?

9. Barriers to taking sign-language instruction were identified by the 28 respondents. While six indicated they were using oral methods to communicate with their children, the remaining parents indicated other barriers. Ten identified that the courses were held at times when they could not attend, 5 indicated that they found the courses too basic, 5 reported difficulties with childcare, and 3 parents already knew and were using sign-language with their children, 1 found the expense a barrier, 3 identified distance/inconvenience as a problem. The involvement of other members of the family was raised by 3 respondents. Two noted the difficulty in managing to get the time when they had responsibilities with their work, spouse, and other children. Two parents indicated a preference for the use of signed English.	9. Of the 46 respondents, 3 indicated they were using oral methods to communicate with their children. Seven parents felt that the range of skill level was another barrier–at times holding parents back due to frustration or embarrassment in light of other parent's skills. Difficulties with making time for courses amongst other family responsibilities was noted by 18. Distance was indicated by 16 people, 2 identified a problem with having to arrange for childcare. Six parents indicated a preference for signed English.

10. What improvements would you like to see to the existing programs?

10. Of the 28 respondents, 6 suggested that location be changed, 4 favored holding classes in the day, 7 preferred the afternoon, 6 said "yes" to classes held on the weekend, and 10 preferred the evening. Childcare and provision of instruction to other children in the family was checked by 8 parents. Assistance with transportation to and from classes was favored by 4 respondents. 14 parents indicated a willingness to hold sign-language classes in their homes. 15 parents were in favor of having a Deaf mentor in their home. One respondent indicated a preference for signed English. One asked for more linguistic content in classes offered.	10. Of the 46 respondents, 26 suggested that the location be changed to bring it closer to the respondent's community, 4 favored holding classes in the day, 4 preferred the afternoon, 10 checked the weekend, 29 preferred the evening. Childcare was requested by 2 parents and provision of instruction of children in the family was checked by 12 parents. Assistance with transportation was requested by 1 person. 15 parents indicated a willingness to hold sign-language classes in their homes. 18 respondents indicated an interest in having a Deaf mentor in their home.

11. If new programs were developed to teach parents sign-language, what kind of programs do you think would be most helpful?

11. Of the 28 respondents, the following ideas were given as to how the sign-language programs could be made more helpful: a) Bring parents together and have classes in someone's home. This would enable new parents to meet other parents and would help them learn faster in a comfortable environment. b) There should be a progressive series of ASL courses and workshops from beginner through to advanced. Relevant courses ie. Local signs, how to discuss issues and information with our children, etc. should be included. c) Have more involvement/interaction with the Deaf community. d) Have more Deaf mentors. e) Have the kids at school make video tapes of themselves signing a story about their family, friends, daily routines, or just a funny story. This would help with the facial expressions and gestures as these are very important when signing. f) Set up programs during the evenings and weekends with transportation and child care. g) Give parents a choice of having instruction in either ASL or Signed English.	11. Of the 46 respondents, the pretest ideas were supported and augmented by the following suggestions as to how the sign-language programs could be made more helpful: a)Have programs in the home with our Deaf child and the rest of our family. b) Have programs in small groups in parent's homes or in a convenient community area with other parents who have Deaf children. c) Have Deaf mentors available for all families who want them. d) Include visits and presentations from Deaf members in the community as part of the instruction. e) Make learning more social by encouraging parents to participate in Deaf community events and encouraging the Deaf community clubs to post their notices about events in the school newsletter. f) Make available videos and books for home use that deal with signs adaptable to the parent's level of skill and appropriateness in communicating with their Deaf children. g) Give parents a choice of having instruction in either ASL or Signed English.

12. What would be the best way to let parents know about the new programs?

12. Of the 28 respondents, the following represent a summary of suggestions as to how best to let parents know about the new programs: a) mail directly (letters, newsletters) b) phone parents using a phone committee c) inform parents at parent meetings d) send notices home with the child e) send notices with the home-visiting teacher	12. Of the 46 respondents, the pretest ideas were supported and augmented by the following summary of suggestions as to how best to let parents know about the new programs: a) mail directly (letters, newsletters) b) phone parents using a phone committee c) inform parents at parent meetings d) send notices home with the child e) send notices with the home-visiting teacher f) put notices on the bulletin boards of community centers/agencies g) send information out to the community school boards

13. What would be the best way to get parents to attend the programs?

13. Of the 28 respondents, the following were comments reflecting ideas as to ways to get parents to attend the programs: a) Get parents involved in recruiting. Make parents feel they are welcome and that the Deaf community supports their efforts. Offer different ranges of difficulty. b) Make the program a support group and signing class and allow new parents to socialize with other parents to get a greater understanding of Deaf culture and sign. c) Get input from students, parents, teachers, and residential counselors and set up groups in the community to be a support to parents. d) Make classes available in or near parent's homes on evenings and weekends with a flexible schedule to help parents who work shifts. e) Provide childcare, and encourage the Deaf mentor program with new families.	13. Of the 46 respondents, the pretest ideas were supported and augmented by the following suggestions as to how to get parents to attend the programs: a) Hearing parents need encouragement from the Deaf community to keep on developing their signing skills. Involvement in social events as well as sign classes should begin as soon as the parents accept signing as their child's means of communication, and continue thereafter. b) Encourage parents to talk with each other and offer support groups and outreach. Accurate/ unbiased information needs to be available to parents long before school age and should be done in conjunction with the work done by the preschool home-visiting teacher. c) Teach all members in a family. Also use a home teacher or a Deaf mentor, who could adjust the pace and difficulty of the courses. d) Plan courses around a variety of events–social events, educational activities, daily tasks (shopping, etc.), field trips to special interest places, maybe try to incorporate some of the program into regular kids classes at the school–interact in the classroom. Encourage and plan programs around the inclusion of the whole family. e) Provide day care or activities for the child and siblings while the parents are learning sign-language.

Appendix J

The Summary Report to Parents on Practicum Completion

January 1999.

Dear Parents:

The time has come for me to share with you the results of the research we have done together. I want to begin by thanking all of you who have taken the time to be a part of this work. Supported by our Principal, the Vice-Principal of the external resource services program, the former sign-language and Deaf culture coordinator, the sign-language instructors, Deaf mentors, and the Parent Association, this research has been possible because of the participation of you, the parents of the children who are Deaf and receive services from this school.

Growing from the 28 who responded to the preimplementation survey, I want to also acknowledge the 46 who responded to the postimplementation survey. Your participation in the sign-language instruction programs and your responses to the surveys, have made a difference. While you are welcome to call me to discuss the results in more detail, the following will provide you with a summary of the findings.

Though ASL has been deemed the language of instruction through the air and English as the language of literacy at this school, it has been noted that there are still parents who, having learned how to communicate with their children in signed English, prefer to continue to use that code of English instead of learning how to use ASL. Though it is likely that the philosophical debate will continue, it is with an attitude of respect for all parents who find a way to successfully communicate with their children that these results are being presented. What has become clear from the responses received is that you are a group of caring parents. Aware and sometimes even overwhelmed by the barriers posed by deafness, you are yet determined to communicate with your children in whatever way you can.

In reviewing your feedback, it has been evident that more of you have become aware of not only the existence of programs but in addition, your need for them. Possibly, as your awareness of the programs available and sense of what you need to be able to communicate effectively with your children has increased, you have also become discriminating in your choice of instruction. Just as responses have noted difficulty in participation in sign-language instruction due to problems in location, scheduling, and childcare, so too have you articulated the kind of instruction you want for yourselves. Asking for varying levels of difficulty in instruction and a variable schedule of location and time of day, you have opted for having classes that are geographically convenient and in the form of small groups, or family-centered with the use of a Deaf mentor to address needs for whole family involvement and childcare.

The research we have undertaken has also uncovered that the interest in developing the sign-language program is not limited to new, hearing, parents of deaf

children. Interest reaches across all age groups of children and includes Deaf parents who would be willing to share their experiences by way of teaching, mentoring, or simply meeting with parents who are interested in learning ASL. Being part of the social aspect of Deaf culture (ie. Community Deaf clubs) has also been raised as a further and fun way of learning how to communicate using ASL.

As we make plans for the next series of sign-language instruction programs, your ideas will be taken into consideration. You will be pleased to know that someone has been hired to develop the sign-language instruction program and be the lead Deaf mentor. Be looking for notices in letters, invitations from your home-visiting teachers, and upcoming school newsletters describing programs that may be of interest and convenience to you.

Again, thank you. Your interest and time will improve the delivery of our sign-language instruction program and that will be a benefit for all of us–no less the children.

Sincerely,

Social Worker.

cc. Program Director
Principal
Vice-Principal, Resource Services Program
Former Sign-language and Deaf Culture Coordinator
Parent Association
Sign-language Instruction Program and Lead Deaf Mentor
Sign-Language Instructors